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## **PRACTICAL INDICATORS OF A DEMOCRATIC PRESS FACT IN MASS MEDIA OF MODERN AZERBAIJAN**

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The fact of independence of Azerbaijan provided formation and development of national media system and the democratic press in this system as a whole. The article analyzes the press agencies, especially newspapers showing themselves in Azerbaijan within the framework of operating principles of the democratic press. In this case the theoretical grounds of the factors isolating a type of democratic newspaper are given and special attention is paid to the application of these theoretical models – for example, social responsibility concept on a national basis. Scientific and theoretical grounds of the article are based on a special care taken by the modern Azerbaijani state to the democratic press and performance indicators of newspaper types formed as a result of this care. The operation of the “525-ci qəzet” (“525th newspaper”) and “Kaspi” (“Caspian”) newspapers involved in analysis in the article has been generalized and these press agencies have been presented as the typical factors of the democratic press.

*Key words:* independence, democratic press, concept, censorship, Azerbaijanism.

**Introduction.** Azerbaijani press has undergone very important stages during the years of independence and reached modern level referring to the modern world practice, especially, the practice of democratic countries. First of all, this level can be measured by the democratic nature of our national press. Today’s face of Azerbaijani media environment is measured by the press system of democratic nature. There are tens of newspapers, several TV channels and radio organizations which operate in the country that on the one hand, they are distinguished by an independent management system and on the other hand, by democratic principles arising from this independence.

Such type of media system hasn’t arisen all of a sudden. Even in the first years of independence, one of researchers showed that “discussions and exchange of views on press do not stop after the state censorship was cancelled and the assignment of control function was given to the media’s internal censor of beliefs and spirituality” [3, p. 212]. We can speak for hours about the fact that National Leader of Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev accepted democratic media as a priority policy of our state and His care and attention for the formation of mass media legislation for this. It should be once more noted that even in the first decade of the independence of Azerbaijan, President Heydar Aliyev prepared the concept of democratic media. H. Aliyev always supported journalists to realize this concept. In July 1999, our National Leader, in His congratulatory letter addressed to “Press workers of the Republic of Azerbaijan” said: “Azerbaijani

press has always been a herald of great social ideas throughout its rich and glorious history and rendered exclusive services in strengthening our people's desire for freedom and independence, spiritual progress, preservation of high moral values and especially, in the formation of democratic rules" [1, p. 239].

As can be clearly seen, here, number services of press, as well as, its role in instilling democratic values to the society have been highly appreciated. After these opinions, our National Leader, stating that press has further developed by Azerbaijan's gaining independence, said: "Media, which is benefitted from national and universal values has obtained great opportunities to realize its higher goals after our republic gained its state independence. The protection of press, freedom of speech and expression is followed without returning to political pluralism in the Republic of Azerbaijan that has chosen the path of democratic, legal and secular state building" [1, p. 239].

We should add that all of these emerged as a result of Heydar Aliyev's development strategy of democratic media in independent Azerbaijan. H. Aliyev expressed in His theoretical views on the media how to realize this concept with its full meaning: "Media is a powerful tool giving impetus to the political development and deepening democracy. Today, the main task is to effectively use its broad opportunities in national state building, restoration of democratic values, formation of political and civil society, implementation of reforms and people's spiritual purification" [1, p. 239].

H. Aliyev determined the most important and classical duties of media in this way: "Media should be the mirror of life and the herald of truth, it should call and mobilize people in the fight for high ideals" [1, p. 239]. Azerbaijani press developed as an entire system around this theoretical concept and these general challenges; mainly, its democratic branch has emerged and began to play a key role in the community life.

Towards the end of the mid – 1990s, an entire system containing a number of functional branches of Azerbaijani press was formed. The people taking part in the process of a new state building all together understood that there cannot be a democratic state without free and democratic press. The examples of democratic press emerging from the end of 1980s appeared as a special force in 1990s. Democratic press "confirmed its place in the system of media" [10, p. 5]. There fore, political and legal basis were formed for the emergence of such type of press in the country. Since this period, newspapers that showed their types even in their names emerged: "Opposition", "Independent newspaper", "Democratic Azerbaijan" etc. [10, p. 144].

However, not all of the newspapers which there is the word "democratic" even in their names can be considered as democratic. Democratic nature must show itself in the information policy of the newspaper. Such newspapers include in the system of "independent newspapers". Such type of newspapers serve neither government, nor party, nor group interests. They only address to public interest. Among such newspapers, "Newspaper 525", "Kaspi", "Express", "East", "Justice" etc. can be shown. These independent newspapers act as the main indicators of democratic media. Regarding this, first of all, we would like to focus on the activity principles of "Newspaper 525".

"Newspaper 525" was founded in 1992. Founder and editor in chief is Rashad Majid. Rashad Majid is a journalist by profession. He graduated from the Faculty of Journalism at Baku State University. Therefore, he is known as a professional writer – journalist who has formed not only the technology of establishment of newspaper, but also its auditorium, public interest circle and information policy. "Newspaper 525" gathered real professionals who are mostly and perhaps, unambiguously journalists around it from the first times of its establishment.

Today, Yashar Aliyev, Yusif Rzayev, Sevinj Murvatgizi, Kamil Hamzaoghlu, and Basdi Alibayli who are famous as professional writers – journalists both in medial environment, and

also in artistic and public environment of Azerbaijan have raised the level of this newspaper to the highest peak. And also, this level has been seen from the first times of the establishment of newspaper. "Newspaper 525" was among three highly rated newspapers in the expert survey conducted by "New Generation" Azerbaijan Journalist Union for 1997–1998 [10, p. 123]. At that time, the circulation of newspaper was about ten thousand copies. Now, about 30 journalists work at the editorial office. Tens of journalists who acquired professionalism at this editorial office now function at various prestigious media organizations, as well as, TV and radio channels in the republic.

"Newspaper 525" has involved a number of creative intellectuals from our republic, as well as, Turkey, Central Asia, Russia in cooperation with its democratic and independent activity. Azerbaijan's deceased writers and poets such as Ismayil Shikhli, Famil Mehdi, Bakhtiyar Vahabzade, Mammad Araz, Yashar Garayev, Isi Malikzadeh considered this newspaper as the most important tribune for saying a word to the people. Today, Azerbaijan's public figures, government officials, writers and poets, and philologist professors such as Ali Hasanov, Anar, Elchin, Elmira Akhundova, Ramiz Rovshan, Vagif Yusifli, Jahangir Mammadli, Agil Abbas, Shamil Valiyev, Alkhan Mammadov maintain a constant creativity relationship with this newspaper and mainly, publish their writings in this newspaper.

It should be especially noted that an independent and democratic nature of "Newspaper 525" created a special condition for the newspaper to have a wide and diverse range of the author's contingent. Therefore, prominent publicist, member of Parliament (Milli Majlis), Elmira Akhundova says in one of her writings about this newspaper: "It is already a certain time that "Newspaper 525" has included in my daily reading even without perceiving this myself <...> from its establishment, though this newspaper was considered as a political and social publication, its artistic and publicist side is especially interesting <...>".

According to the representatives of politicized journalism, the readers of literature should be avoided from the newspaper. However, in contrary: "Saturday edition which almost all pages are available for poetry, prose and journalism is more demanding in the intellectual circles as never before. This quality of the newspaper is also in its democratic nature" [2, p. 77].

Representatives of modern science and literary creativity such as Anar, Elchin, B. Vahabzade, J. Mammadli etc. expressed many opinions about the nature and democratic spirit of "Newspaper 525". And also, newspaper's function of enlightenment is expressed in many of these opinions. It is obvious that "as in other fields of the life, there are events that affect the development level and interests of the people as whole, visible and invisible sides in the fields of philosophy, science and education. There is a great need for revealing one's own and essences, and promoting necessary knowledge for our life to be more complete, more democratic, more inclusive. This is a mission of enlightenment" [4, p. 3]. "Newspaper 525" can realize the democratic nature of this "mission".

We can focus on newspaper "Kaspi", as one of the indicators of activity of democratic press. As the activity of "Kaspi" proves that the independence of press depends mostly on the achievement of democratic values by society and regime or how much its desire for it [6, p. 8]. Classical newspaper "Kaspi" functions as a democratic press agency in Azerbaijan's news independence conditions.

If legal conditions created by modern Azerbaijan for uncensored democratic press, on the one hand, stipulate the emergence of newspapers and magazines with new perspectives, on the other hand, it gives an opportunity for classical newspapers and magazines to come up again and present new publications of the most memorable ones among them. Among such publications, "Molla Nasraddin", "Fuyuzat", "Ishig" etc. magazines and especially, newspaper "Kaspi" can be mentioned as an example. The founder of the re – publication of newspaper "Kaspi",

PhD in philology, poet, publicist Sona Valiyeva mentions that “In 1881, after a permission was given to Kuzmin, the first editor, for the publication of newspaper “Kaspi”, Azerbaijan’s progressive-minded intellectuals tried to reflect their opinions and ideas in their articles on different literary and social themes” [9, p. 442].

Since 1881, as this newspaper which was published in the Russian language in Baku gathered national intellectuals, brought up the ideas of Azerbaijanism and independence more or less and did serious works for enlightenment at that time, it has given us a basis for its re – publication at our time. So, since 1999, newspaper “Kaspi” has been released and it has served and serves to our people with the formation of democratic rules in the country, the mission of enlightenment, preservation of our state and statehood with accurate, unbiased information and literary and artistic publicize and promotion of literature and art.

“Kaspi” which has a special place in the history of Azerbaijani press took an active part in the process of enlightenment, national identity and national consciousness and delivered its ideas to the people with the intellectuals gathered around it. This newspaper was published in Russian at a time when tsarist censorship didn’t allow for the publication of newspaper in Azerbaijani in the end of XIX century. “Therefore, our progressive and national – minded intellectuals – H. Zardabi, N. Vazirov, N. Narimanov, A. Hagverdiyev, M. Shahtakhtli, A. Aghayev, F. Kocharli, I. Sultan etc. had to disseminate their opinions and views in the pages of media outlets in Russian, as well as, “Kaspi” for a long time” [7, p. 114].

“Kaspi”, which was published between 1881–1919, had a mission of service for the nation with the power of the above mentioned intellectuals. It is true that though sometimes, the newspaper was obliged to function on the basis of “orders” of imperial policy, it was difficult to prevent national spirit of its authors. Republication of the newspaper under the foundation of Firm “Intellect” on March 7, 1999, is the result of the respect and esteem of modern Azerbaijan to our classical heritage. Republished “Kaspi”, presenting its idea in the program article in the 1st issue, expressed its main aim and desire. It is said in that program article: “Our main aim is neither earn money by disseminating cheap sensation, nor to turn it into anyone’s political tribune, nor settle accounts with anyone, nor implement anyone’s different orders. We want to build a since communication with you (readers – *Red.*) and highlight your ideas as they are without passing them from any political and personal filter” [5].

Indeed, facts show that modern “Kaspi” is not only devoted to the ideas of its predecessor, but also, it is implementing very serious creativity for nation by increasing these ideas by far.

According to Professor Jahangir Mammadli, the platform, information policy, aims and duties of the newspaper are felt clearly from its first issue. At that time, when there were a lot of newspapers emerged, “Kaspi” undertook the mission to continue bright ideas of its predecessor and support the policy of modern Azerbaijan, its views on social problems, economic development and cultural development speaking from the demands of a new era. So, an Azerbaijani reader obtained a newspaper highlighting the development of Motherland, expressing the problems of readers and giving impetus to the development of our culture from new parameters. “Kaspi” took all its opportunities for professionalism based on national traditions of journalism and gathered professional publicists and journalists.

The newspaper, based on international creativity principles of journalism, has formed the unbiased and honorable information policy. This newspaper, which has passed over its ten years of activity, has a stable auditorium of readers. This auditorium well feels and knows the difference of this newspaper from other newspapers that allow for lies and insults for increasing the circulation of unbiased and fair information. “Kaspi” is a press agency that maintains its information patience, accuracy and impartiality in a moment when there is a place for the most critical, hot

and any type of rumors in the community life. Issues which is covered by these themes determine its information policy and typological nature.

The scope of theme of “Kaspi” is very broad. The world of theme of the newspaper which is published in the volume of 16 – 24 pages, first of all, include Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanism. The newspaper takes foreword the factors that give impetus to the development of Azerbaijan, love for Motherland, formation of the feeling of struggle against enemies, especially, Armenian aggressors that occupied our lands. Every issue that is of a public importance is in the center of newspaper’s attention.

One of the main aspects that differentiate “Kaspi” is that the newspaper keeps policy and political issues on the agenda, highlights political life of the country always on a separate newspaper, but itself doesn’t interfere with the policy. It goes without saying that several officers of the newspaper have their impacts on the policy and activity of politicians, but political word and political theme are presented mostly without any comment in the information of newspaper.

**Discussion and conclusion.** We have mentioned the newspaper’s direction of Azerbaijanism above. “Kaspi” always keeps the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, activity of Azerbaijanis for serving to Motherland and international organization’s attitude towards Azerbaijan.

The most serious tradition accepted by “Kaspi” from classical “Kaspi” is that this newspaper is also devoted to the ideas of enlightenment. One of the main places of newspaper is occupied by its attitude towards literary word, literature and national art. Especially, “Kaspi” does a great job by giving a special place for artistic literature. Artistic literature is not among the themes to which newspaper addresses rarely. The newspaper delivers artistic literature to reader with special additions. And also, this artistic word occupies a regular place on pages of newspaper. “Kaspi” calls readers to not forget past and be aware of today presenting new literary trends, successful examples of national literature and examples of our classic. Artistic and aesthetic value of these examples usually instills optimistic mood and optimistic future for readers. And also, these pages that are presented with the addition of “Literature” have a very interesting slogan promising objectivity: “We don’t publish signatures, but works” [8, p. 40].

“Kaspi” continues its path which has begun from the end of XIX century in the second decade of XXI century. This newspaper provides readers with unbiased, accurate, honest information focusing on the strongest historical roots of Azerbaijani press. Today, processes of revival of many newspapers which have glorious traces in the history of press and re – writing their names in the history are observed. Do these desires of journalists always coincide with their activity? An unambiguous answer to this question is very difficult. However, today’s activity of “Kaspi” gives serious basis for being optimistic.

We have many newspapers that operate with independent and democratic principles. We wanted to summarize the activity of the examples of democratic press showing themselves in the modern environment of Azerbaijani media analyzing two newspapers which are popular among readers.

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## ПРАКТИЧНІ ПОКАЗНИКИ ДЕМОКРАТИЧНОЇ ПРЕСИ В СИСТЕМІ ЗАСОБІВ МАСОВОЇ ІНФОРМАЦІЇ СУЧАСНОГО АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНУ

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Незалежність Азербайджану загалом забезпечила формування і розвиток національної системи засобів масової інформації та демократичної преси в цій системі. У статті аналізується діяльність органів друку, зокрема й газет, у межах принципів діяльності демократичної преси. Водночас розкриваються теоретичні основи чинників, які обґрунтовують тип демократичної газети, особлива увага приділяється реалізації цих теоретичних моделей, наприклад, концепції соціальної відповідальності на національній основі. Науково-теоретичні основи статті пов'язані зі сприянням азербайджанської держави розвитку демократичної преси і з показниками дієвості газетних публікацій, що є результатом такого сприяння. Проаналізована в статті діяльність газет «525-ci qəzet» («525-я газета») і «Kaspi» («Каспій») була узагальнена, зазначені органи друку були представлені як типові зразки демократичної преси.

*Ключові слова:* незалежність, демократична преса, концепція, цензура, азербайджанізм.